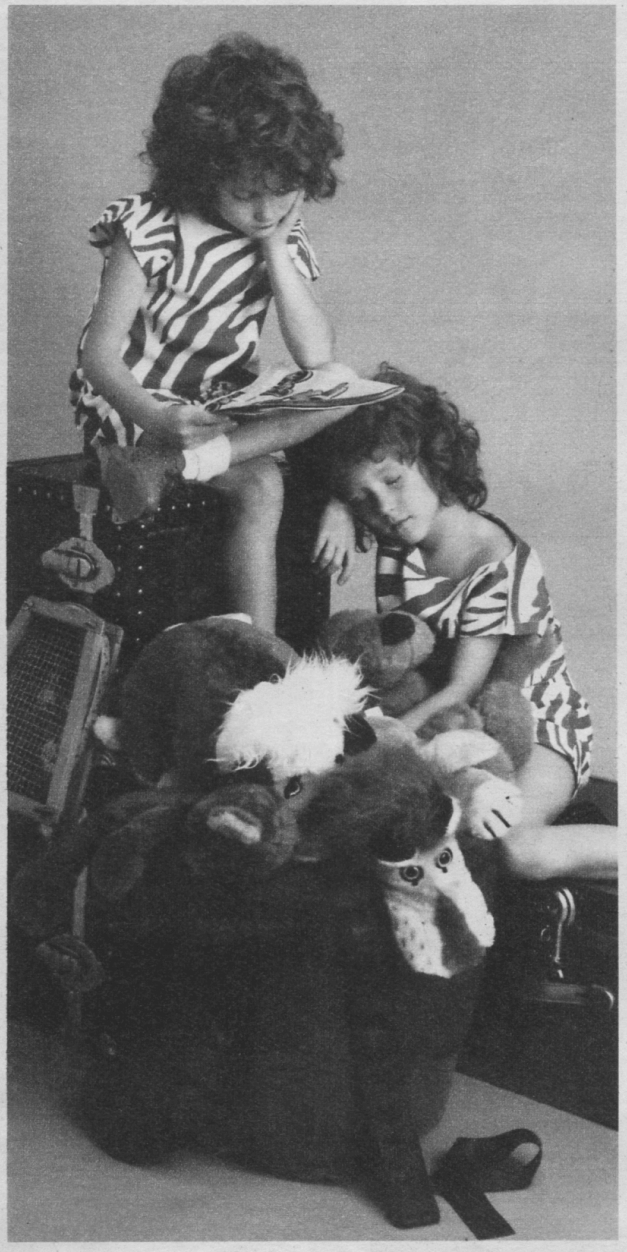
We Believe that
Children Should be Seen
As well as Heard.



JET SET®

JET SET is a registered U.S. trademark of Maniye Brothers, Inc.

AVAILABLE AT: FILENE'S, BOSTON•SIBLEY'S, ROCHESTER•IVEY'S, CHARLOTTE•THALHIMER'S, RICHMOND J.W. ROBINSON CO., LOS ANGELES•THE BROADWAY, LOS ANGELES•THE BON, SEATTLE•DIAMOND'S, TEMPE•LIBERTY HOUSE, HONOLULU•STRAWBRIDGE & CLOTHIER, PHILADELPHIA•JOHN WANAMAKER, PHILADELPHIA•FAMOUS-BARR, ST. LOUIS•BURDINES, MIAMI•BLOOMINGDALE'S, NEW YORK•MACY'S, NEW YORK, KANSAS CITY, SAN FRANCISCO•GIMBELS, EAST/WEST•ABRAHAM & STRAUS, BROOKLYN J.L. HUDSON, DETROIT•CARSON PIRIE SCOTT, CHICAGO•JOSKE'S, DALLAS, HOUSTON, SAN ANTONIO FOLEY'S, HOUSTON, SAN ANTONIO• PALAIS ROYAL, HOUSTON•DENVER DRY GOODS, DENVER THE CHILDREN'S PLACE

JET SET, 112 West 34th Street, Suite 700, New York, NewYork 10120

The New York Times Magazine

May 5, 1985

William Safire — **17 On Language**
Come as You Are

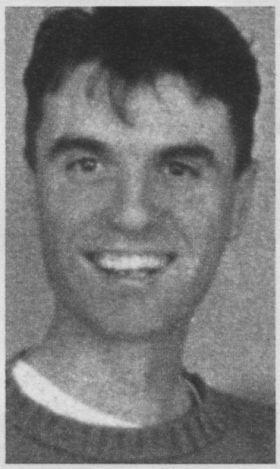
Russell Baker — **30 Sunday Observer**
A Pronounced Difference

Esther B. Fein — **32 The Choice**
Women officers decide to stay in or leave.

Herbert Burkholz — **48 Redesigning Human Bones**
A quiet revolution in orthopedics is enabling surgeons to reshape, replace and repair the skeletal system.

THE CREATIVE MIND

Ken Emerson — **54 David Byrne: Thinking Man's Rock Star**



Louis Menashe — **58 The New Wave From Russia**
In Brooklyn's Polytechnic Institute, Russian émigré students 'correct' American assumptions about the country they left.

Terence Smith — **76 About Men**
The Sailboat Addiction

Carol Vogel — **80 Home Design / Fashion**
Crossing Over

102 Puzzles
Answers, Page 72

118 Letters

Cover: *Capt. Carol A. Barkalow on the Army base at Fort Lee, Va. Photograph by Anthony Edgeworth.*

Copyright © 1985, The New York Times

KABUKI
GAUDI
Twentieth Century Architecture
Outsider Art
TRUE STORIES
SOURCE MATERIAL
TRUE PRESS

DAVID BYRNE: THINKING MAN'S ROCK STAR

By Ken Emerson

PEROXIDE AND BLACK LEATHER. THE ELEVATOR at Manhattan's Hard Rock Cafe is crammed with members of rock groups trooping their colors. A live radio broadcast has just ended, and musicians are descending — Cheap Trick, Joan Jett's Blackhearts, and, pressed against the back of the car, a rail-thin man whose short, dark hair makes him look at once adolescent and ascetic. His somber designer suit may be high fashion, but the ballpoint pen protruding from its breast pocket is definitely high-school nerd. Clearly, he doesn't belong in this gaggle of pop notorieties. But, out on the street, two young women squeal and one asks for his autograph. Nonplussed but polite, he scribbles "David Byrne" and hastens into the night.

A few weeks later, on a bright March afternoon, no one at the Brooklyn Museum appears to recognize the 32-year-old lead singer, songwriter and guitarist of the rock group Talking Heads, even though he is gazing up at a life-size cutout of himself. The white silhouette is part of a construction, entitled "Heads Will Roll," by Robert Longo, one of the young artists lumped together as Neo-Expressionists.

A museum is as likely a place for Byrne to be found as the Hard Rock Cafe, because he straddles two worlds: pop music and the avant-garde.

> Byrne excels at jaywalking across the lines dividing high and low art.

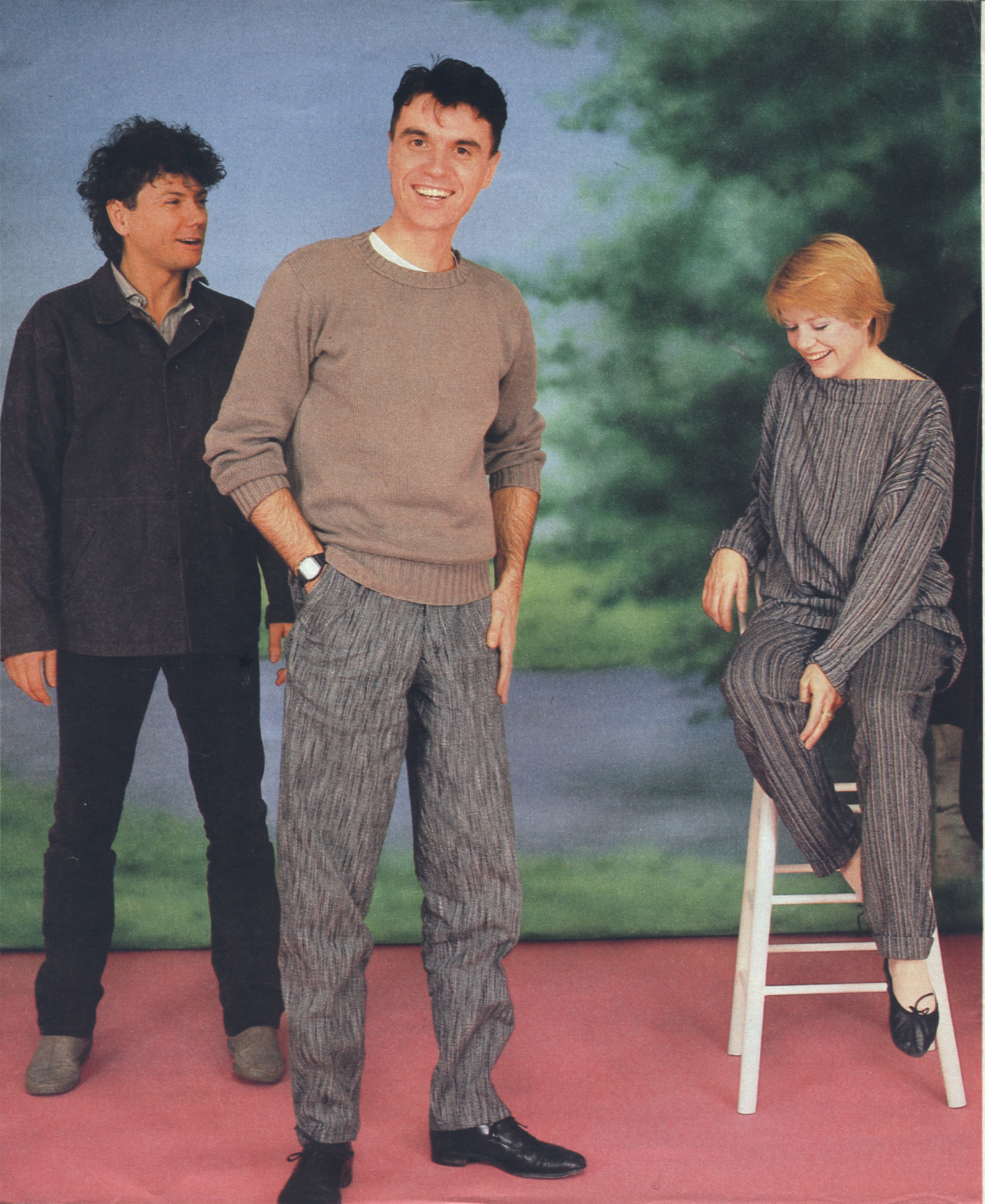
Over the course of 10 years and seven albums (an eighth, as yet untitled, is scheduled for release early this summer), the Talking Heads have evolved from austere minimalists into exuberant eclecticists. In the process, they have established themselves as the most consistently imaginative white rock band in America, whose highly stylized presentation owes more to the visual arts than to the gaudy theatrics of pop performance. It's a thinking man's band that makes rock-and-roll intellectually intriguing in a way it has seldom been since the late

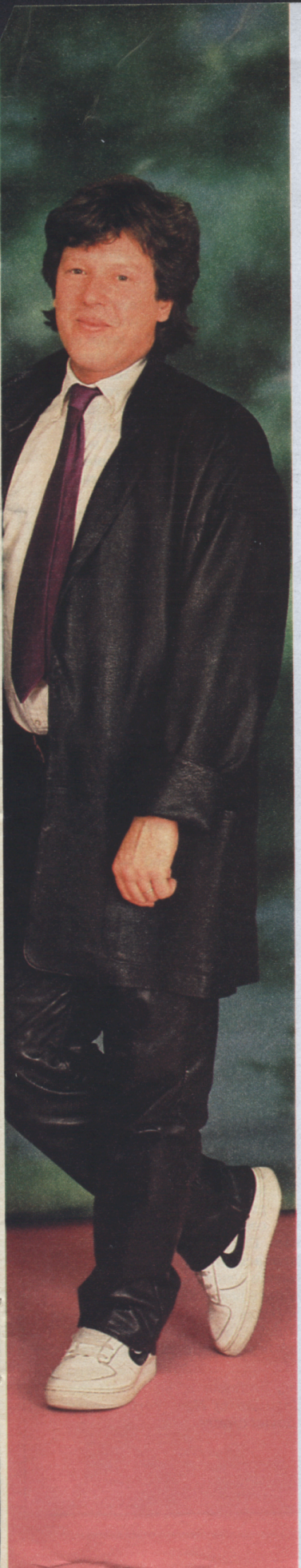
Ken Emerson is articles editor of this magazine.

This article is one in an occasional series examining the process of creative thought among Americans in various fields, ranging from the arts and sciences to business and commerce.

DAVID BYRNE, LEADER OF TALKING HEADS, AT HIS DESK.

BENNO FRIEDMAN





TALKING HEADS, LEFT TO RIGHT: JERRY HARRISON, DAVID BYRNE, TINA WEYMOUTH AND CHRIS FRANTZ.

BENNO FRIEDMAN

1960's, when professors were applauding the poetry of Bob Dylan and explicating the ironies of the Beatles.

Byrne's lyrics have, from the beginning, shuttled between the cerebral and the surreal, with side trips into the schitzy. In the very first song he wrote, "Psycho Killer," the protagonist talks to himself in formal French because, Byrne thought, "it seemed a natural delusion that a psychotic killer would imagine himself as very refined and use a foreign language to talk to himself."

The incongruity of introducing French into what otherwise might seem B-movie material is typical of the Talking Heads. Because their work is so complex and quirky, they are not superstars. Although one of their albums, "Speaking in Tongues," has sold slightly more than a million copies in the United States, they usually sell half that many. (Compare those figures to 9.5 million for Prince's album, "Purple Rain.") But Talking Heads' audience has steadily expanded, and, recently, still more converts have been won by "Stop Making Sense," a Talking Heads concert film, directed by Jonathan Demme, which received the National Society of Film Critics award for best documentary of 1984. It has disseminated an indelible image of Byrne, his eyes popping and his Adam's apple bobbing to the beat as he performs an elephantine yet agile dance in an immense white suit.

Talking Heads makes quirky, intellectually intriguing rock.

Byrne, independently of Talking Heads, has another audience as well. In 1981, the choreographer Twyla Tharp presented an 80-minute dance, "The Catherine Wheel," set to an original score he composed and performed with a variety of musicians.

This January, at New York's Public Theater, Byrne put on a performance piece, "The Tourist Way of Knowledge," at a benefit for Mabou Mines, the avant-garde theater troupe. Wearing a cardigan right out of "Father Knows Best," Byrne narrated a slide show, depicting a cross-country vacation, with a deadpan reading drawn, in part, from a diary he had written as a 10-year-old.

Byrne has also just released an album, "Music for the Knee Plays," music and texts he has composed for avant-garde theater director Robert Wilson's epic opera, "the CIVIL warS." Called "Knee Plays" because they function as "joints" between the opera's longer scenes — Wilson used similar devices in "Einstein on the Beach," his celebrated collaboration with the composer Philip Glass — these brief pieces are scored for brass ensemble and owe far more to contemporary avant-garde "serious music" than they do to rock-and-roll.

"We are watching someone realize a very deep talent," says Glass. "It's highly unconventional, and that makes it interesting. I think he will be writing music that everyone is going to have to think of as concert music, and not just the Talking Heads." (Byrne, as well as pop songwriter Paul Simon and peformance artist Laurie Anderson, is currently writing lyrics that Glass intends to set to music for an album of songs.)

"I think there's no contradiction between my doing 'The Knee Plays' and doing pop songs with Talking Heads," says Byrne. Indeed, his ability to work both sides of the street, to jaywalk, as it were, across the lines dividing high and low art, artistic integrity and commercial popularity, makes Byrne emblematic of a new generation of creative talent we've grown used to labeling, for want of a better tag, post-modernist.

ON A COLD AFTERNOON IN A SMALL, cluttered Greenwich Village rehearsal studio, the Talking Heads are practicing songs for their next album.

"It's so much fun to be able to relax and just play," says Tina Weymouth, 34, putting down her bass guitar during a break, "without feeling you have to be avant-garde all the time. We spent so many years trying to be original that we don't know what original *is* anymore."

Indeed, the songs the band has just run through, occasionally consulting notebooks and scratch pads for the chord changes and lyrics, do sound surprisingly straightforward and, at times, even old-fashioned. One has the merry jingle of late 1950's rock-and-roll — even if its disconcerting lyrics are about a woman who literally levitates out of her suburban backyard. Another song slips in a little country-and-western sentimentality.

"The drugs of the 80's," jokes Chris Frantz, 33, from behind his black drum kit. "Sex and corn." He punctuates the wisecrack with a drum roll. In addition to being the drummer and offstage comedian of the group, Frantz is Tina Weymouth's husband and the father of their 2-year-old son, Robin.

The Talking Heads seem intent but relaxed as they put musical flesh on the bare bones of the demonstration tapes Byrne *(Continued on Page 74)*

OLGA'S DESIGNER SOLUTION #5

The V-kini™ with Lycra® lace

YOUR QUESTION:

"I love bikini panties but the tops always make a show-through ridge across my tummy. Must I wear only undies that come to the waist?"

OLGA DESIGNS THE ANSWER!

She calls it her "V-kini" — a deep plunge of soft stretch lace that dips below the tummy instead of across it. It disappears into your curves so there's no "two tummy" dividing line... no bulges to show through clothes. #1790 in nylon/Lycra® spandex. Sizes S-7 in Champagne, Black, White and fashion colors, $30 in the best Part Departments.

®Dupont registered trademark

available at

Bloomingdale's

and other stores with fashion spirit

behind every OLGA there really is an Olga

A Vermont Original

Call it character, call it tradition, call it style... there's something about Stowe that can't be duplicated. Spectacular mountain scenery surrounding a 19th century village. Add to that a summer-long festival of sports, music, theater, arts and crafts... 4-Star resorts, comfortable country inns... and an enticing variety of restaurants and shops. It's all part of Vermont's leading resort area since 1833.

For vacation planning and color brochure call or write Stowe Area Assn., P.O. Box C, Stowe, Vermont, VT 05672

Stowe

Home
Home
Home
Home
Home
Home

New ideas for making a house a home. Every Thursday.

Home
Home
Home
Home
Home
Home

DAVID BYRNE

Continued from Page 57

has recorded at home. Byrne, who reads music "only with extreme difficulty," usually roughs out these tapes with his voice and guitar and a rhythm box, an electronic device that can be set to repeat any desired drum beat. Byrne originates nearly all of Talking Heads' songs, but their arrangement and execution are definitely collaborative.

"I know what the chords are," says Jerry Harrison, 36, as he hesitates among several electric keyboards. "But I've got to change the end, where it vamps out."

Byrne, dressed down in a navy turtleneck, jeans and moth-eaten slipper-socks, empties with chopsticks a plastic container of bean sprouts, tofu and noodles, then picks up his guitar once again.

"Did you like that when I held one note?" he asks after improvising a guitar part.

"Sounded like DeBarge," Frantz volunteers, referring to a popular black band.

"But if it sounds like someone else . . .," Byrne trails off dubiously.

THE TALKING HEADS have sounded like nobody else from the very beginning, when they started playing together at the Rhode Island School of Design.

Born in Scotland, Byrne was reared, from the second grade, in Baltimore, where his father, now retired, worked as an electrical engineer for Westinghouse. In high school, he was something of a comic rebel, running for student office one year on a platform to "get the jukebox back in the cafeteria and eliminate faculty advisers. I came pretty close," Byrne says with a chuckle, "but I never won, ever."

Like most teen-agers in the 1960's, Byrne fell under the spell of rock-and-roll. (The Beatles' "Day Tripper" is the first single he remembers buying.) For the fun of it, he began playing guitar in a local college coffeehouse, performing rock songs in a folk-music style and "comedy things — I'd play aggressive songs on the ukulele."

When it came time for college, Byrne hesitated between art and technical school, "because I was interested in the ideas of science and math, and I saw no difference between that and art." Byrne settled on R.I.S.D. in 1970, but transferred after a year to a Baltimore art school before dropping out of college altogether.

He returned to the school of design to visit his friend Chris Frantz, still enrolled there. Together, they formed the Artistics (a k a the Autistics), "a ragged, loud rock band," in Byrne's words, to play school dances.

By 1975, they were sharing an apartment in New York with Frantz's girlfriend, Tina Weymouth, another student from the school of design, and working as a trio under the name Talking Heads. Tina Weymouth had performed in a hand-bell-ringing group at the 1964 New York World's Fair and had taught herself the guitar, but she had never played bass. "The whole idea of an unaccomplished bass player," she explains, "was that David and Chris could mold me. I already shared many of the same concepts, intellectually."

Some of those concepts were pretty rarefied. Byrne explains that he became "fascinated by conceptual art. In particular, there was some that just used language. They'd just write a statement on the wall, and other ones would put out little pamphlets. There was a group called Art & Language that just talked all the time in print. And I thought that was pretty much the ultimate in refining and eliminating all the superfluous stuff in art and being left with nothing but the idea. Which seemed to me an extension of the notion of art that established itself in the early part of the century — the whole notion of something being modern, of modern art, of the Bauhaus and all those kinds of things. That seemed to be taking it to its logical extreme, which made perfect sense to me."

In the beginning, recalls Frantz, their New York audiences "were painters and writers, almost exclusively." And when, in 1977, they added a musician with more professional experience on keyboards and guitar, Jerry Harrison, he was an architecture major from Harvard.

But the Talking Heads did not necessarily consider their music art, as opposed to rock-and-roll. "We crossed that

(Continued on Page 77)

Continued from Page 74

line a long time ago," Tina Weymouth says. "We said, 'Look, we know we're in a sleazy business. We're not going to call ourselves artists.' "

Still, as Harrison explains, "because everyone in the band had studied visual arts, I think there was a certain applying of the way you make decisions about paintings to songs."

The music of the Talking Heads' early days had a stiff, twitchy beat — a cross between a goose step and Saint Vitus' dance. Byrne squawked his vocals like a chicken whose neck was being wrung. It was difficult to tell whether he was Angst-ridden, ironic or simply inept.

"My singing doesn't sound as much like a screech as it used to," Byrne says today. "It was never intended to. When we began, I found that I could hear myself above the noise better if I sang in a higher pitch."

Some Talking Heads songs were funny, with Byrne sounding like a lovesick chemistry student who had been in the laboratory too long. Others were mystifying:

As the heart finds the good thing
The feeling is multiplied
Add the will to the strength
And it equals conviction
As we economize
Efficiency is multiplied
To the extent I am determined
*The result is the good thing.**

"I'd been reading a lot of books about systems theory and management theory," Byrne says, "theories about how the structure of a business can be like that of an organism. And how the creative process can be broken down into almost a computer flow chart. So I started looking at music and the structure of words that way."

Why?

He scratches his head. "I'm not sure. It's a philosophy that tends to be very mechanistic, and I found that fascinating for a while. I was trying to see, I guess in some vain hope, if there was an underlying rational basis for everything."

*"THE GOOD THING" BY DAVID BYRNE. © 1978 BLEU DISQUE MUSIC COMPANY INC. & INDEX MUSIC, INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

Talking Heads conformed to no one's idea of a rock-and-roll band. "When we were playing clubs," Byrne says, "the typical rock stance was aggressive — black leather and shades and all that. We were deliberately going against that."

Talking Heads also dispensed with that old standby, sex appeal. "I must say I think it's just not in me," Byrne says, "to flaunt sex on stage. It's probably my upbringing, but it's something I've never been able to bring myself to do."

Indeed, the group rejected all the conventional wisdom — and razzle-dazzle — about rock-and-roll stagecraft and just stood there, stock-still, wearing unprepossessing T-shirts or alligator shirts. "We threw out the idea of costumes, of lighting, of any kind of movement or gestures on stage," Byrne says.

The uncompromising severity of Talking Heads' early performances created an excruciating intellectual tension without providing the emotional release traditionally associated with rock-and-roll. You left a concert feeling high, all right, but it was not the high of catharsis; it was the hyperventilating rush of an anxiety attack.

THE TALKING HEADS' musical sophistication, as well as the way they created songs, began to undergo a transformation when, on their second album, they started working with Brian Eno as their producer. Brian Peter George St. John de Baptiste de la Salle Eno is an eccentric Englishman who was a founding member in the early 1970's of the British band Roxy Music. He is not a musician per se; ideas are his instrument, and those are far-ranging. To him, the whole world, from third-world folksongs to the clangor of modern industry, is *musique concrète*, raw material to be dissected, distorted, juxtaposed and reassembled in the recording studio. "It was like taking the songwriting process," Byrne says, "and exploding it into its different components."

Gradually, over the course of three albums, Talking Heads and Eno packed more and more components into the music. They went as far afield as Africa and the Middle East, incorporating exotic percussion and polyrhythmic interplay. Closer to home, they adapted the synthesizer squiggles and heavy-bottomed basslines of contemporary American black funk.

The words as well as the music seemed to dart in all directions. Some songs were improvised; others were cryptic collages. "It was a period," Byrne says, bemused, "when I was coming to accept the idea that rational thinking has its limits."

As the songs became denser and ever more danceable, they burst out of artists' lofts and college dormitories and onto the blaring "hot boxes" of city streets. The music eventually became so complex that four musicians could not play all the parts on stage, and the group recruited as many as half a dozen other musicians — guitarists, keyboard and percussion players and back-up singers, black as well as white — to accompany them on tour.

"In a sort of sociological way," Jerry Harrison says, "I felt there was a growing racism in the United States and that, in a very quiet way, we made this big point. We were both male and female,

YOU CAN BRING DOWN THE COST OF EUROPE WHEN YOU BRING BACK A NEW MERCEDES-BENZ.

IF YOU PLAN on touring Europe this year, you can take overseas delivery of any 1985 Mercedes-Benz gasoline or diesel model you choose.*

Pick it up at the Stuttgart Delivery Center and enjoy a driving vacation unmatched for comfort, convenience and freedom. Avoid costly car rentals while saving on the price of your new Mercedes-Benz.

For details, get our free "European Delivery" color brochure. Just clip and send the coupon at right.

*Subject to availability

Send coupon to:
Mercedes-Benz of North America, Inc.
Marketing Communications Division
One Mercedes Drive, Montvale, NJ 07645

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

© 1985 Mercedes-Benz of N.A., Inc., Montvale, N.J. RTM685

NORTH CAROLINA: VACATION VARIETYLAND

Tall Stories.

Our free travel package can help you plan a vacation in North Carolina's legendary mountains. (Or the midlands, for that matter. Or the beach.) It's full of facts about places to see, places to stay and things to do all over North Carolina.

So send us the coupon for your free North Carolina Travel Package. It could be some of the best vacation reading you'll ever do.

Name _____ Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Free North Carolina Travel Package

Call toll-free 1-800-VISIT NC. Operator 895.

North Carolina Travel, Department 895, Raleigh, North Carolina 27699

America's most gracious golf & tennis resort

Just $214* 3 days/2 nights with unlimited recreation, breakfast and dinner daily.

With six championship courses—including one of the world's top 10—we're America's premier golf resort. And with 24 courts, we're one of the nation's top 50 tennis resorts. Plus we offer recreational shooting, horseback riding, a private 200 acre lake, health spa and an 85-year tradition of Southern hospitality born in the era of the Grand Hotels.

For reservations, call toll-free 800-334-9560. In N.C., 800-672-4644. Or write Pinehurst Hotel and Country Club, Reservations, P.O. Box 4000, Pinehurst, NC 28374.

PINEHURST

America's most gracious golf & tennis resort.

*Per person, double occupancy now through June 15 and Sept. 1-Nov. 15, 1985. Rates subject to 15% service charge in lieu of tipping and 4.5% state tax. Surcharge for Course #3.

HOTEL EUROPA

Hotel Europa, Chapel Hill, NC, near the famed Research Triangle Park, creates its own resort-like setting. Swimming, jogging and tennis are on premises, with golf and horseback riding minutes away. Access to Raleigh-Durham Airport and major highways makes it easy to reach; and 172 rooms and suites, backed by convention facilities, make it easy to stay.

Preferred Hotels

Europa Drive, Chapel Hill, NC 27514

Toll-free U.S. 800-334-6200

FOR INFORMATION ON UPCOMING

NORTH CAROLINA ADVERTISING FEATURES

CALL:

DAN HERMAN

(215) 735-4904

black and white, on stage, having fun, no one in a particularly subservient role, and no one drawing attention to it."

The results were liberating. When the expanded group performed live, says Byrne, "the excitement or release that I thought was possible from music became a reality. It became impossible not to dance around to it on stage, very hard not to have some sort of good time. Here was the way out of a dilemma that we'd put ourselves in, where the songs were perceived as being more and more about personal Angst. Here was music that was proposing a solution to things like that."

"But, of course," Byrne says self-deprecatingly, "I didn't notice that until we were doing it. Looking back, it's like we rediscovered the wheel."

DAVID BYRNE'S SOHo loft is tidy "low-tech": stackable, gunmetal gray chairs, slate table tops on Erector Set supports. He shares it, and a rented house in Los Angeles, with his companion of three years, Adelle Lutz. Half-Japanese and half-American, Adelle Lutz, like her sister Tina Chow (the wife of restaurateur Michael Chow), once modeled. Now she is a jill-of-all-trades in the performing and video arts.

On the gray industrial carpet in the main room, which combines working, cooking and dining space, are strewn hundreds of Polaroid pictures: architectural details, fragments of graffiti and posters, close-ups of fruit and vegetables in street-market bins. Some of the pictures are arrayed in rectangular grids on brown wrapping paper. "I'm just moving them around," Byrne explains, "and seeing if anything happens."

Trusting intuition and improvisation within a rational though arbitrary structure like a grid seems to be Byrne's standard operating procedure. He cites the piecemeal evolution of "Once in a Lifetime," from the 1980 album, "Remain in Light," the last Talking Heads record produced by Brian Eno. The song's dramatic shifts also make it a highlight of the film "Stop Making Sense."

"It started with a guitar riff that I played for the band," Byrne remembers. "It's in there, in the chorus, but you would never pick it out." That and "another little guitar lick," plus a rudimentary bass part, were all they had to go on.

"And then, in the process of recording, we played, alternately, eight bars of one riff and eight bars of the other riff. Later, we added other rhythms and instruments on top of those, until the whole thing was just packed with stuff.

"And we'd play with switching things in and out. So that, let's say, if you had eight different parts playing continuously, we'd say, 'O.K., for these four bars, you'll only hear those four, and then, when it comes to these four bars, we'll switch those four off and switch these ones on.' "

Such composing could only occur in the modern recording studio.

"It's trial and error," Byrne admits. "I had written some words, but they weren't working. Brian sang a melody of the chorus, nonsense syllables. And I said, 'Make me a cassette of this arrangement with your nonsense singing in the choruses.'

"And then I went home and played it very loud. I'd been listening to some preachers on the radio. I played [the cassette] very loud and adopted the character of a preacher and kind of spontaneously spurted out the lyrics that became the verses. I'm not sure how it came about. At some point, I just hit upon the water stuff."

The verses Byrne hollers are increasingly frantic questions — "Where is that large automobile?" "What is that beautiful house?" "Am I right? . . . Am I wrong?" — that undermine the certainties and rewards of bourgeois life. Each is rhetorically introduced, as if from the pulpit, by the phrase, "And you may ask yourself." "The water stuff" is a vaguely tribal-sounding chorus, chanted by the band:

Letting the days go by/ let the water hold me down
Letting the days go by/ water flowing underground
Into the blue again/after the money's gone
*Once in a lifetime/water flowing underground.**

Byrne says that, in retrospect, the water seems to him "a symbol of submission, of letting go. In that sense, it's both life and death. It's a death that implies a rebirth or a resurrection of some sort. So the answer becomes,

(Continued on Page 94)

*"ONCE IN A LIFETIME" BY DAVID BYRNE & BRIAN ENO. © 1980 BLEU DISQUE MUSIC COMPANY INC. & E.G. MUSIC LTD. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

DAVID BYRNE

Continued from Page 78

BENNO FRIEDMAN

Tina Weymouth at work earlier this year in the recording studio.

'Don't worry, give up, and then you'll discover the answer' — or something to that effect. It's a very Islamic or Buddhist kind of attitude, which has its similarity, I guess, with the fundamentalist Christian religions."

A guitar lick here, a radio sermon there. Synthesizers and jungle drums. It's the wrenching out of context and mixing and matching that appeal to Byrne. "I feel that's where creativity, or new things, come from. From being misunderstood or scrambled or rearranged."

Tina Weymouth would concur, although she puts it more wryly. Talking Heads' music, she says, is like "that New Yorker cartoon where a man on a sofa says to the woman beside him, " 'Yes, I know I'm just one long line of clichés, but I put them together in a really interesting way, don't you think?' We're taking clichés and hoping that, since we think they're funny, maybe other people will, too.

"Like David in his big suit. He takes the most obvious thing, and people all go, 'Genius! Genius!' "

The origins of the huge white suit that Byrne dons for a couple of numbers in "Stop Making Sense" are not obvious to most viewers of the movie. It is the most memorable prop in the film and the focus of its advertising. "That was my choice," says Byrne. "It makes a big statement that the band has accepted the idea of theatrical artifice."

Byrne describes the genesis of the suit: During dinner in Tokyo with Adelle Lutz and a friend, the fashion designer Jurgen Lehl, Byrne was wondering how to stage Talking Heads' upcoming tour. Lehl, according to Byrne, "said something like, 'Well, you know, in the theater, they say that everything should be a little bit bigger than real life.' So I said, 'Well, of course! I'll be sort of Mister Man, but a little bit bigger.' So I drew on a napkin a big square, which I thought was like an icon of Mister Man.

"I also guess, since we were in Japan, it had a similarity to a lot of their costumes. It made the head look tiny, and the costume became this whole kind of set."

Byrne's ideas often spring from such sketches. From the bookshelf behind him he takes a red plastic looseleaf notebook and starts to turn the pages, onto which are affixed little pencil drawings, three by five inches, opposite typed dialogue and camera directions. It is the script he has written for "True Stories," a feature-length film he plans to direct later this year.

"The original drawings were pretty abstract ideas." He turns to a sketch of a plate laden with peas and two unidentifiable lumps. Below it is another sketch, an angled

view of a glass. "I wanted to do a dinner scene where the food gets rearranged into different shapes on the table and a glass of milk lights up. The food is treated as an abstract element."

He flips to three sketches of gesturing hands. "This came from a book of journalists' photos. Those are Nixon's hands, making a speech.

"I put those sketches up on the wall, until there was a wallful. They had nothing to do whatsoever with any story or character, so they could be moved around and shifted anywhere. So I moved them on the wall until the whole thing seemed to flow in some kind of logical shape."

Only after deciding, for economic reasons, to set the film in Texas, a right-to-work state, did Byrne begin to worry about a plot. "And then I got a lot of ideas for characters out of tabloid papers. Like, we've got a husband and wife who think of themselves as happily married, but they haven't spoken to one another in 30 years. They spoke through their children, and then, when the children left, they hired a live-in maid and spoke through her."

THERE ARE TIMES David Byrne could use someone to translate his talk into down-to-earth terms. There's a shyness to him that he seldom overcomes except when performing. Like the levitating woman in one of his new songs, he seems to drift easily into a world of his own. Sitting in his loft, speaking softly and sometimes haltingly, he becomes animated only in order to entertain an idea, never to express an emotion. All the systems and information theories, all the orderly grids, seem to be elaborate defense mechanisms.

So do his lyrics. "It became harder," he acknowledges, "to write about things that struck a chord in myself, and I felt most comfortable doing that by speaking in a very ambiguous way. If I said exactly what I felt, because of — I don't know — my inabilities as a singer, it would come across as corny or kind of flat. And so I find that the way to say things that seem to touch me is, at least until recently, to put them into a kind of language that in most cases isn't narrative or literal."

This acute self-consciousness is the source of much of Byrne's appeal. When he careers about the stage, he gives an audience the vicarious, giddy thrill of watching a wallflower suddenly pop a lampshade on his head. (Indeed, at one point during "Stop Making Sense," Byrne performs a wacky dance with a floor lamp.) As Tina Weymouth points out, Byrne used to be terrified of making a fool of himself. "Now," she says, "he has found out that if he falls down, people love it. So he uses it."

To feel awkward and anxious and yet to be in control is an admirable triumph of the will, but one that takes its toll. One nearly always scents in Byrne's music — and this is what makes it exciting — a whiff of scarcely suppressed hysteria. As the painter Robert Longo says, "His images have the appearance of normalcy, but there is also insanity inside it."

Tina Weymouth tries to explain the loony alienation lurking in Byrne's songs. "A lot of times people will say, 'Ah, yes, David is echoing strains of Proust and Camus and Orwell,' and they'll attribute this great modern insight to him. And, true, he's read those things. We all are influenced by those things. But to think that he's calculating, in the sense that he's observing Western man in alienation from himself, that he's outside of it, observing it and putting it into an art form to characterize it, is crazy.

"I think that's really how David feels. I'm not saying that David's completely bonkers, but," she hesitates, "he really is. He's adapted to his situation. He's not making a social criticism. He thinks it's all very funny.

"David is — it's a very good quality, actually, for someone doing what he's doing — like a sponge, like an adolescent who continues to absorb what's around him. Psychologists, I guess, would call it a 'loose ego' or something."

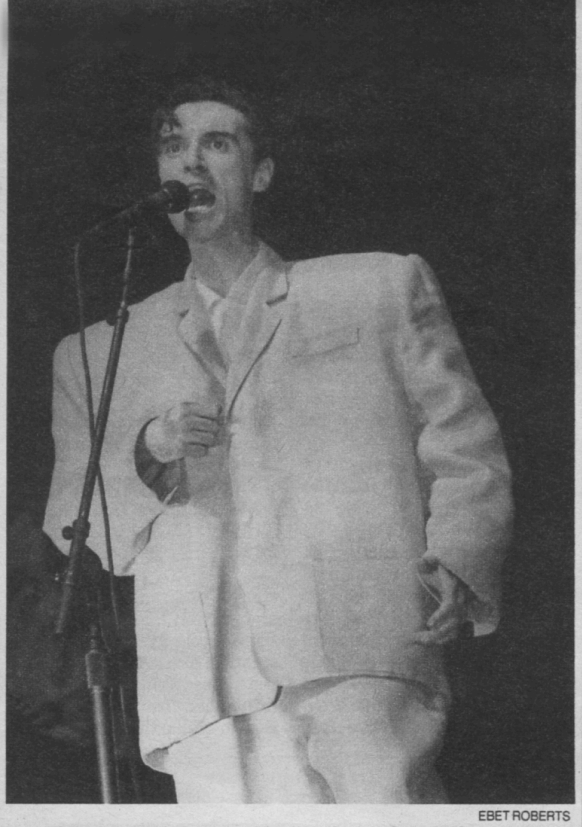
WHAT ABSORBS Byrne most these days are the avant-garde arts, in which, he says, he has rediscovered the same thrill he derived

FIFTY WAYS TO PLEASE
YOUR MOTHER
We've actually got a lot more than 50 products to choose from. Great products that cook up a storm, take the wrinkle out of doing the laundry, or put the curl in her hair.
And when you buy selected GE Housewares Appliances, you can save up to $11.00.
So hurry over to your participating GE retailer for details and take credit for making your Mother's Day.
Mother's Day Bonus Dollar Certificate
Plus Rebates Worth up to $10.
Just include this certificate when you mail us your rebate form from your participating GE retailer...and we'll add $1.00 to your rebate. Offer void where prohibited, taxed or restricted. Offer expires May 31, 1985, and requests must be postmarked by June 21, 1985. This certificate may not be reproduced. Limit: one bonus dollar per rebate.

from rock-and-roll as a teenager.

His involvement with "The Knee Plays" for Robert Wilson's "CIVIL warS" is more than just musical. Indeed Wilson, who has little use for rock-and-roll, was originally interested in Byrne's stage presence. "I liked the intimacy of his performance," he says, "the humor, the coolness. In order to be really hot on stage, you have to be cool." Drawing in part on the traditions of Japanese Kabuki and Bunraku puppet theater, Byrne and Wilson, assisted by Adelle Lutz, developed the concepts for these 13 three- to six-minute dreamlike tableaux inhabited by dancers in white smocks manipulating puppetlike constructions. Byrne also wrote texts, by turns humorous or gnomic. "I thought that if I ate the food of the area I was visiting," begins "Knee Play 4 (Social Studies)," "that I might assimilate the point of view of the people there. As if the point of view was somehow in the food."

Byrne composed the score for brass ensemble on a digitalized synthesizer called an Emulator that enables one to duplicate and record the sounds of any instrument. Then he had it notated. On the tapes he used to mix the album, one could still hear an occasional baffled interjection from the musicians, mostly moonlighting members of the band from "The Tonight Show." Echoing everything from the harmonies of Bulgarian folk songs to the marches of turn-of-the-century New Orleans, they are redolent of the repetitions of Philip Glass, but their brevity and jazzy playfulness distinguish them from run-of-the-mill minimalism.



EBET ROBERTS

David Byrne, in signature white suit from "Stop Making Sense."

Byrne's adventures outside the group, as well as occasional differences within it, make the future of Talking Heads uncertain. The band is a cooperative venture, but inevitably Byrne receives most of the attention, which just as inevitably creates considerable strain. Frantz and Weymouth have eased some of it by forming another band, Tom Tom Club, whose 1981 hit, "Genius of Love," sold more copies than any Talking Heads single to date. Jerry Harrison has nearly finished his second solo album.

"In the beginning," says Byrne, "we were like a family, but eventually it becomes more like a business, a creative business. I kind of wish we could all be as close as we were years ago, and we all to some extent keep struggling to return to that. But, at the same time, I love all these other things that I'm involved in. The ideal would be that the band is one thing that we all do, and that we can all do other things."

The fate of Talking Heads is as unpredictable as the reception of their next album. Certainly the down-home accordion and pedal-steel guitar they plan to add to a couple of songs will surprise listeners accustomed to their urban funk. Maybe, says Byrne, "I've gone the long way around and come to accept almost the conventional song structure as a valid way of working."

Chris Frantz puts it in simpler terms: "I think David really wants to sing. He wants to croon. And we've found out that Tina and Jerry are very good singing harmonies with him. They sound very sweet. So we can express a sweetness that we never expressed before. We can touch people in a different way."

"It has something to do," Tina Weymouth concludes, "with discovering the unsleaziness of rock and roll." ■

BRAZIL-CONTEMPO

AMERICA'S LARGEST IMPORTER OF LEATHER FURNITURE

FROM NOW UNTIL MAY 19, WE'VE GIVEN OUR CURVES A NEW FIGURE: $1690.

It's our Special Lugano Collection—a 3-piece sectional (as shown below); a sofa and a loveseat; or a sofa and two chairs—for a slim $1690. The Lugano is made of the glove-soft leather we've become famous for. And you can choose from among 33 handsome colors. So come in before May 19, or we'll flip the tag over and return it to $2585. And then you'd miss showing off your curves on our curves.

THE SPECIAL LUGANO COLLECTION IS ON SALE FOR $1690 (LIST $2585). (A CURVED MODULAR AND 2 ONE-ARMED LOVESEATS; A SOFA AND 2 CHAIRS; OR A SOFA AND A LOVESEAT.) ARMLESS CHAIR, AS SHOWN $345.

OPEN 7 DAYS A WEEK

HARTSDALE 183 SOUTH CENTRAL AVENUE (914) 683-1414 ▲ FOREST HILLS 118-47 QUEENS BOULEVARD (718) 268-6077 ▲ MANHATTAN 42 EAST 20TH STREET (2ND FLOOR) (212) 505-2277 CEDARHURST 112 SPRUCE STREET (516) 374-7040 ▲ UNION, NJ ON ROUTE 22 WEST (201) 851-2544 (PLEASE CALL FOR DIRECTIONS) ▲ WESTBURY 473 OLD COUNTRY ROAD (516) 997-4433 LONG ISLAND CITY (CLEARANCE CENTER) 48-49 33RD STREET (718) 392-8200 (2 BLOCKS OFF QUEENS BOULEVARD)